

still a persistent achievement gap in many of our Nation's schools with respect to low-income and minority students. The nationwide high school graduation rate hovers around 70 percent and is even lower for students of color and low-income students. This is unacceptable and is a matter of fairness and equality that must be addressed. We can do better. We must do better. The future of our country rests on our efforts. Federal, State and local governments must work together to continue to support our educators and help ensure that every child has access to good teachers and high-quality schools.

That is why I am looking forward to working with educators as Congress undertakes the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind. We now have the opportunity to rethink the proper role for the Federal Government in education reform and how we can best support States and school districts as they continue to work to educate all our Nation's children and close the persistent achievement gap that still exists in too many of our Nation's schools. We need to work together to solve problems, strengthen our public school system, and make certain that all our students receive the education they deserve.

As Chief Justice Warren wrote when he delivered the opinion of the Supreme Court in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision:

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

More than 50 years later, these words still ring true, and as we celebrate American Education Week, let us honor the outstanding work that our Nation's educators do every day and recommit ourselves to working with these educators to address the continued inequities in American education so that all children, regardless of their background, can receive a high-quality public education.

COMBATING HUNGER

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as we prepare to depart for the Thanksgiving break, I wish to thank those who work to combat hunger in this country and to commend the administration for its goal of eliminating child hunger by 2015. I encourage the administration to

work with Congress to find solutions to achieve this goal and end hunger in America.

We must commit ourselves to solving this crisis. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has just released findings that 14.6 percent of Americans were "food insecure," up from 11.1 percent in 2007. Food insecurity is measured by the number of persons who experience hunger at some point during the year because they could not afford enough food.

The Agriculture Department also found that one-third of these households had what the researchers called "very low food security," which means that they were forced to skip meals or cut portions. The other two-thirds of households got by only through reliance on food stamps, soup kitchens, and food pantries.

The nearly 4 percent increase in food insecurity between 2007 and 2008 is the largest since USDA began reporting hunger statistics in 1995. Even more disturbing, USDA reports that nearly 17 million children live in households where food was scarce at some point during the last year. This figure amounts to more than one out of every five children in the United States.

An astonishing 1.1 million children went to sleep hungry at some point in 2008—a 36-percent increase from 2007. In my State of Maryland, more than 135,000 children currently live in food insecure households. Sixty-three thousand of these children are under the age of 5.

No child should ever know what it means to be hungry. Childhood hunger hinders development in the long term, and children who are hungry have difficulty learning and are at much higher risk to be in poverty as adults. Hunger negatively affects children's behavior, school performance, and cognitive development.

As we celebrate this holiday season, it is important to reflect on how each of us can support our communities. In my home State, the employees and volunteers at the Maryland Food Bank provide 14 million pounds of food annually to those in need. Working with more than 1,000 partner organizations, including soup kitchens, senior centers, daycare centers and afterschool programs, the food bank works to fill unmet needs of Maryland families. In these difficult economic times, the services of the Maryland Food Bank are more important than ever.

During the past year, the staff at the food bank's facilities in Baltimore and Salisbury saw demand increase by 50 percent. Middle-class families who a year ago made donations to the food bank are now turning to the organization to put food on their own tables.

Americans with full-time jobs are the fastest growing cohort of those in need. As unemployment continues to rise, families are being forced to spend their savings and are too quickly moving from middle to low income. America's working poor are most at risk. They

live from paycheck to paycheck and have no safety net if their company downsizes or their hours are cut. When money is short, Americans are forced to make excruciating choices.

It is estimated that one-third of Marylanders relying on food assistance must choose between buying food and paying utility bills. Fifty-three percent of those who receive food assistance have unpaid medical bills. The number of working poor families in Maryland is 70 percent higher than it was two decades ago.

In addition to the food bank, I also want to highlight the work of employees at the many social service agencies across our State. These dedicated workers devote their time and energy to helping their community and work side-by-side with the Maryland Food Bank and other organizations to provide meals and services to those in need.

For example, the Maryland Department of Education works closely with the Maryland Food Bank on several projects that provide students with nutritious meals. More than 303,000 Maryland children rely on free or reduced-price meals in schools. Through the Backpack Program, the food bank provides schools such as Baltimore Highlands Elementary with backpacks filled with food. Children receive the backpacks on Friday afternoons to ensure they are not hungry over the weekend.

Kids Cafe is an innovative partnership between the food bank, the Maryland Department of Education, and local afterschool programs that provides nutritious meals and teaches children how to make healthful food choices.

Our seniors are also at risk of food insecurity at much higher levels than the general population. I applaud efforts such as the SNAP Outreach Program in Maryland, which is a partnership between the USDA and local organizations to help register seniors for food assistance programs.

Despite these efforts, we need to do more. In my State alone, it would take 82 million pounds of food to support the more than 350,000 Marylanders in need every year.

We must recommit ourselves to serving our communities and work together to support those in need during these difficult times.

So as Senators and staff leave Washington for their home States and prepare to give thanks and enjoy the company of family and friends, I encourage us all to show our support for those who work daily to make mealtime possible for millions of Americans in need.

225TH BIRTHDAY OF FORMER PRESIDENT ZACHARY TAYLOR

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 225th anniversary of the birth of MG Zachary Taylor, a Virginia native son and the 12th President of the United States of America.

Best remembered as a distinguished military hero, Zachary Taylor was known as a resourceful, steadfast, modest and compassionate commander who fought many successful battles, earning from his soldiers and countrymen the affectionate nickname "Old Rough and Ready."

Zachary Taylor's personal popularity increased as his national prominence spread. General Taylor defeated Henry Clay, Winfield Scott and Daniel Webster for the Whig Party Presidential nomination. Although he had not sought office, Zachary Taylor was elected the 12th President of the United States.

Slavery was the driving issue of the campaign and the primary challenge of Zachary Taylor's brief Presidency. In his inaugural address, Zachary Taylor promised that the preservation of the Union would be his first obligation. He was determined to find a solution to end slavery even though he was a southerner and a slave holder. Zachary Taylor urged settlers in New Mexico and California to bypass the territorial stage and draft constitutions for statehood. As Southern Democrats called for a secession convention, Zachary Taylor reacted with a bristling statement that he would hang anyone who tried to disrupt the Union by force or by conspiracy, setting the stage for the Compromise of 1850.

During his 15 months in office, Zachary Taylor also created the Department of the Interior and signed a treaty with Great Britain guaranteeing a neutral canal connecting North and South America.

After laying the cornerstone of the Washington Monument on July 4, 1850, Zachary Taylor fell ill and passed away. An unprecedented 100,000 people lined the funeral route to see the hero laid at rest.

On November 24, 2009, representatives of local, State and Federal Government will gather to honor one of Orange County's most famous native sons. First Day Issue Zachary Taylor Dollar coins will be given to county schoolchildren. Please join me in commemorating the life of Zachary Taylor and the courage and efforts during his term of office to bring a peaceful end to slavery in the United States.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO PETER S. LEVI

• Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today I wish to honor a fine Missourian, Peter S. Levi, for his distinguished career as well as his lifelong commitment to community and economic development.

Mr. Levi has worked tirelessly in developing and fostering economic development throughout the Kansas City area for over 30 years. He first became involved in the region as executive director of the Mid-America Regional Council. After 13 years as the executive

director, he moved on to become president of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Levi's lifelong dedication to the city of Kansas City and surrounding area is evident through his championing of Kansas City and its economic potential. His 19 years as one of the chamber's most effective presidents has seen the chamber grow to represent about 9,000 area businesses while expanding the chamber's annual budget to over \$6 million.

Along with Mr. Levi's work with the Chamber of Commerce he has been an active member of several boards including the Kansas City Symphony, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Midwest Research Institute, University of Kansas Medical Center, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City.

Mr. Levi is a graduate of Northwestern University, B.A., and the University of Missouri-Kansas City, J.D., masters of law in urban legal affairs. He is married to Enid Levi and they have two sons Josh and Jeff.

Mr. Levi will retire from the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce on December 31 of this year. From his honorable service to the community to his impeccable leadership within the Chamber of Commerce, Peter S. Levi has always worked to inspire those around him with his vigor, sense of duty, and pride in his community.

With his many Kansas City friends, I thank Pete for his service to the city of Kansas City, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.●

REMEMBERING LEWIS MILLETT

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am honored to remember Lewis Millett—a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, a retired Army colonel and a proud American who passed away on November 14, 2009.

Colonel Millett retired from the U.S. Army after a 31-year career that spanned three wars. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for leading a bayonet charge up a heavily defended hill during the Korean war. In his 31-year career in the Army, that included service in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, Colonel Millett received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, three Bronze Stars, four Purple Hearts, and three Air Medals.

Born December 15, 1920, in Mechanic Falls, ME, Millett grew up in Massachusetts, where he joined the State National Guard. In 1940, with the war in Europe underway, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. But after President Franklin D. Roosevelt said that no Americans would fight on foreign soil, he deserted the Army and joined the Canadian Army. When he arrived in Europe in 1942, the United States was in the war and he was allowed to transfer back to the U.S. Army.

As a member of the 27th Armored Field Artillery of the 1st Armored Divi-

sion, Colonel Millett participated in the Allied invasion of North Africa, where he earned a Silver Star after driving a burning halftrack loaded with ammunition away from U.S. troops and jumping out before it exploded. After a year in combat, the Army reviewed his military record and convicted him of desertion. He was fined \$52 and sentenced to 3 days hard labor. He was not required to do the hard time, and 2 weeks later he was made a second lieutenant.

After World War II, he returned to civilian status and joined the Maine National Guard. When the Army called for volunteers in 1949, he returned to Active Duty.

He later served in Korea as a company commander and in Vietnam as a military adviser with the intelligence program called Phoenix. Colonel Millett retired from the US Army in 1973.

He is survived by his sons, Lee and Tim, and daughter Elizabeth; a brother, Albert; three sisters, Ellen Larabee, Jean Pepin, and Marion Finnity; and four grandchildren. I extend my heartfelt condolences to them.

The military community, the State of California, and our Nation have lost a proud American and a great warrior.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting nominations which were referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:16 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1839. An act to amend the Small Business Act to improve SCORE, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1842. An act to amend the Small Business Act to improve the Small Business Administration's entrepreneurial development programs, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3014. An act to amend the Small Business Act to provide loan guarantees for the acquisition of health information technology by eligible professionals in solo and small group practices, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3738. An act to amend the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 to establish a program for the Small Business Administration to provide financing to support early-stage small businesses in targeted industries, and for other purposes.